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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001861

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [ZANU](#) [PF](#)

SUBJECT: MINISTER OFFERS INSIGHTS ON ZANU-PF POSTURE

REF: (A) HARARE 1794 (B) HARARE 1782 (C) HARARE 1599

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton, under Section 1.5(b), (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Minister of Mines Edward Chindori-Chininga on September 11 spoke with Ambassador Sullivan on ZANU-PF succession issues and internal party elections. Chindori-Chininga did not break any new ground but confirmed party elections' potential implications for succession and the government's tentative interest in re-engagement with the USG. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) During a meeting in Ambassador Sullivan's office on September 11, Chindori-Chininga elaborated on developments within ZANU-PF. With regard to potential talks with the MDC, Chairman John Nkomo and Spokesman Nathan Shamuyarira were in charge. Chindori-Chininga asserted that the exclusion of hardliners, such as Justice Minister Patrick Chinamasa and Information Minister Jonathon Moyo, augured well for the talks' prospects. Indeed, Chinamasa had been chastened over impolitic remarks about the people of Manicaland bringing on their own misfortune by successively supporting opposition candidates, was embarrassed, and had stopped attending Parliament. Referring to the bishops' initiative (ref A), Chindori-Chininga predicted that the church would have some role in facilitating interparty talks, but that the talks would likely be direct. Talks could start quickly, and parliamentary elections were possible before 2005, when they were next scheduled. A presidential election was nearly certain to occur before the next scheduled one in 2008.

3. (C) Chindori-Chininga advised that Mugabe's intentions about retirement and succession remained uncertain. Even if he were prepared to step down, Mugabe would play things close to the vest and not allow himself to become a lame duck. In any event, ZANU-PF internal elections were proceeding with Mugabe's blessing and held potentially significant implications for succession. Confirming Nkomo's characterization to the Ambassador earlier in the week (ref B), Chindori-Chininga described a sequence of ZANU-PF elections commencing with local polls and climaxing with provincial choices by November -- in time for the Party Congress in December. Provincial leaders could be asked for preferences that would influence or dictate the selection of a new party head. Chindori-Chininga conceded that the party had little experience in such a senior selection process, other than the selection of Chairman John Nkomo in 2000. That case, which saw the unexpected emergence of Nkomo over the favorite, Emmerson Mnangagwa, suggested this instance could yield a surprise as well.

4. (C) Speculating on succession candidates, Chindori-Chininga asserted that Mnangagwa remained a serious contender. While unpopular in many circles, he was strong in Midlands and Masvingo, and might be able to secure the backing of party stalwarts in Manicaland. He had helped himself as Speaker of the Parliament by dealing with the opposition in a tough but civil manner. For his part, Nkomo was highly regarded enough, but was underexposed on a national basis among the party faithful. His ZAPU heritage and Ndebele ethnicity might prove additional handicaps. Defense Minister Sekeramayi also was a viable candidate. His public image of being indecisive was contradicted by his performance within the Cabinet, which had impressed party leaders. Former Finance Minister Simba Makoni was very capable, but probably not a logical choice. He had yet to cultivate a strong base even in Manicaland, his home territory, or to engage significantly with the party's grassroots. Indeed, emphasizing the difficulty of handicapping the race, Chindori-Chinongo observed that none of the candidates had engaged closely with party bases in the provinces beyond the most senior level.

5. (C) Chindori-Chininga confirmed that the political crisis was getting in the way of rational economic policy-making. For instance, arguments for currency devaluation or for printing higher denomination notes were frustrated by arguments over the political cost ZANU-PF would absorb by taking these measures on its own. In the meantime, failure to devalue was killing the banks and key export-oriented sectors, such as minerals. He was hopeful that the Utete Report on land reform, which he confirmed was presented to the Cabinet by Mugabe that day and was scheduled to be published on September 16, would address corruption and

clarify nettlesome issues such as multiple ownership. The last issue was close to home, as a court recently found against him in a highly publicized ownership dispute with prominent War Veterans' leader Michael Moyo -- a case he attributed to unspecified "mischief" by Agriculture Minister Joseph Made.

16. In closing, Chindori-Chinongo expressed interest in how the GOZ and USG might re-engage without offering any suggestions himself.

17. COMMENT: Neither a politburo member nor a dominant force in the Cabinet, the Minister of Mines nonetheless presents a window into ruling party preoccupations and priorities. His professed interest in re-engagement with the USG is consistent with tentative sentiments expressed by others in the government and may be part of an overarching "water-testing" exercise signalled to the bishops last month by Mugabe himself (refs A and C). Chindori-Chininga's dismissal of Chinamasa's role in potential talks with the MDC is at odds with the Justice Minister's reported central involvement in discreet interparty talks about a new constitution; indeed, the constitutional discussions may explain in part his relatively low profile since he blasted the bishops' initiative last month.

SULLIVAN